

Quotes about Family History Work

"This work, unselfishly given in behalf of those on the other side, comes nearer to the unparalleled vicarious work of the Savior than any other of which I know."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Nov 1985, 53

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming"

-- D&C 2:1-3

"The greatest work, after all, devolves on the members of the Church... It matters not what else we have been called to do, or what position we may occupy, or how faithfully in other ways we have labored in the Church, none is exempt from this great obligation. It is required of the apostle as well as the humblest elder. Place, or distinction, or where or how else it may have been, will not entitle one to disregard the salvation of one's dead."

-- President Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, Vol. 2, pp. 148-149

"Be it understood that if we go to the temple, and not for our own dead, we are performing only a part of our duty, because we are also required to go there specifically to save our dead relatives and bind the various generations together by the power of the holy priesthood. We must disabuse our minds of the idea that merely 'going to the temple' discharges our full responsibility, because it does not. That is not enough! God holds each of us responsible for saving our own kindred dead".

-- Elder Mark E. Petersen, Ensign, May 1976, pp. 14-16

"Whether we recognize it or not, we are connected with our past... people who care nothing for the past usually have no thought for the future and are selfish in the way they use the present."

-- President Spencer W. Kimball, World Conference of Records, 12 Aug 1980

"It doesn't matter whether your computer is able to compile all the family group sheets for everyone that every lived on the earth, it remains the responsibility of each individual to know his kindred dead...Even if the work is done, then it is still each person's responsibility to study and become acquainted with his ancestors."

-- President Joseph Fielding Smith - Turned to the Fathers - p.184

"So often we think of our responsibility to do something for those who have gone before. We need to understand that probably one of the most important benefits of preserving our heritage is what it does for us today. If we want our problems to be solved, one of the surest ways of doing that is to search for our past, for therein we receive strength, guidance, and understanding. All of you here today are giving an added eternal dimension to your lives as you learn and study the past. We can receive strength and help from those who have gone on before. To raise our families today, we need to do family research and genealogy."

-- Elder John H. Groberg, First Quorum of Seventy, Press Conference speaking as Chairman of the Olympic Events Executive Committee, 2002

"Knowing who you are and what responsibility you have towards your family forces your behavior to be consistent with your family values. It passes right down across the generations."

-- William Alex Haley, press conference, Freedman's Bank CD, 2/26/2001

"... I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people... If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever."

-- Jeremiah 31: 31, 33, 35

"Our fathers cannot be made perfect without us; we cannot be made perfect without them. They have done their work and now sleep. We are now called upon to do ours; which is to be the greatest work man ever performed on the earth. Millions of our fellow creatures who have lived upon the earth and died without a knowledge of the Gospel must be officiated for in order that they may inherit eternal life. "

-- Brigham Young, Discourses of Brigham Young, 406

"Some of us have had occasion to wait for someone or something for a minute, an hour, a day, a week, or even a year. Can you imagine how our progenitors must feel, some of whom have perhaps been waiting for decades & even centuries for the temple work to be done for them? "We wonder about our progenitors ... What do they think of you and me? We are their offspring. We have the responsibility to do their temple work, and the beautiful temples of the Lord stand day after day, yet we do not fill them always. We have a grave responsibility that we cannot avoid, and may stand in jeopardy if we fail to do this important work."

-- President Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Jan 1977

"...By small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise. And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord...bringeth about the salvation of many souls."

-- Alma 37:6-7

"Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."

-- D&C 64:33

"He is invited to great things who receives small things greatly."

-- Author unknown

"Believe in yourself as a son or daughter of God. Believe in the capacity which the God of heaven has given you to do great and good and worthwhile things... Somehow the Lord makes it possible for His simple, ordinary children to do and accomplish wonderful things."

-- President Hinckley, American Fork Regional Conference,
8/25/2002.

"Our members need to be taught that it is not sufficient for a husband and wife to be sealed in the temple...they must also be eternally linked with their progenitors and see that the work is done for those ancestors. The need for each of us to perform temple and genealogical work has never been more urgent. We must redouble our efforts to accomplish this great and holy work. We cannot hope for perfection without being linked to our forefathers. Neither can they hope for perfection without us. My brothers and sisters, it is up to each of us to see that this work is done."

-- President Ezra Taft Benson, Family Record Extraction
Program Videocassette

"There somehow seems to be the feeling that genealogical work is an all-or-nothing responsibility. Genealogical work is another responsibility for every Latter-day Saint, and we may do it successfully along with all the other callings and responsibilities that rest upon us...You can fulfill your obligations to your kindred dead and to the Lord without forsaking your other Church callings. You can do it without abandoning your family responsibilities. You can do this work. You can do it without becoming a so-called expert in it."

-- Elder Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Jan 1977, 8

"The Lord will bless you once you begin this work. This has been very evident to my family. Since the time we decided that we would start where we were, with what we had, many things have opened to us. It is my testimony that if we start where we are – each of us with ourselves, with such records as we have – and begin putting those in order, things will fall into place as they should.

"It is a matter of getting started. You may come to know the principle that Nephi knew when he said, 'And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do'. Once you begin this project, very interesting and inspiring things will happen"

-- Elder Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Aug 2003, 14-15

"Genealogical work has the power to do something for the dead. It has an equal power to do something to the living. Genealogical work of Church members has a refining, spiritualizing, tempering influence on those who are engaged in it.

"I know of no work in the Church more conducive to spiritual refinement and communication than temple and genealogical work. In this work our hearts and minds are turned to those beyond the veil. Such a work helps us to sharpen our spiritual sensitivities.

"I have the conviction that the Lord will bless us as we attend the sacred ordinance work of the temples. Blessings there will not be limited to our temple service. We will be blessed in all of our affairs. We will be eligible to have the Lord take an interest in our affairs both spiritual and temporal."

-- Elder Boyd K. Packer, The Holy Temple

On the Sunday following the dedication, the Saints gathered together in the temple for a Sabbath meeting. Orson Hyde discussed why they had gone to all the trouble in completing the temple.

"If we moved forward and finished this house we should be received and accepted as a church with our dead, but if not we should be rejected with our dead... In doing this we have only been saved as it were by the skin of our teeth."

-- Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 3:43

"In our preexistent state, in the day of the great council, we made a certain agreement with the Almighty ... We agreed, right then and there, to be saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father's work, and the Savior's work, but also our work"

-- Elder John A. Widstoe, "The Worth of Souls", The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine, Oct 1934.

"By collecting and organizing the ancestral data of our deceased fathers we can perform the saving ordinances for them in the temple. Thus, the living having their hearts turned to their fathers is in accordance with the pre-mortal agreement we made before the earth was formed."

-- Elder David B. Haight, Ensign November 1990

"Oh I wish many times that the veil were lifted off the face of the Latter Day Saints. I wish we could see and know the things of God as they are laboring for the salvation of the human family who are in the spirit world; for if this were so, this whole people, with very few, if any exceptions, would lose all interest in the riches of the world, and instead thereof their whole desires and labors would be directed to redeem their dead".

-- President Wilford Woodruff

"The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. Those saints, who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation"

-- Prophet Joseph Smith, History of the Church, 6:313 and 4:426

"...For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation... we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect."

-- D&C 128:15, 18

"If the veil could be parted and we could see the world of spirits, we would likely discover many among them anxiously praying and hoping that their day of deliverance would come. Their hearts are turned toward their children on whom their hopes rely for deliverance from the prison house".

-- President Joseph Fielding Smith

When we go back into the other life and find our dead friends living there, if we have not performed the labor that is necessary for their exaltation and glory we shall not feel very happy and it will not be a very pleasant meeting.

-- President Lorenzo Snow, The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, p. 97

One of the important phases of gospel living is to involve ourselves in temple and genealogical effort. We know full well that the spirit world is filled with the spirits of men and women who are waiting for you and me to get busy in their behalf. It is a grave responsibility that the Lord has placed upon our shoulders, one that we cannot avoid and for which we stand in jeopardy if we fail to accomplish it.

-- President Spencer W. Kimball, "Living the Gospel in the Home,"

Ensign, May 1978, 100

"Our people cannot partake of all of the blessings unless they can receive their own temple ordinances and then make these ordinances available to those of their kindred dead and others."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Nov 1995, 52

"I believe that the busy person..., who has his worries and troubles, can solve his problems better and more quickly in the house of the Lord than anywhere else. If he will... do the temple work for himself and for his dead, he will confer a mighty blessing upon those who have gone before, and... a blessing will come to him, for at the most unexpected moments, in or out of the temple will come to him, as a revelation, the solution of the problems that vex his life. That is the gift that comes to those who enter the temple properly".

-- Elder John A. Widtsoe, Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine,

April 1921, 63-64

"Whoever seeks to help those on the other side receives help in turn in all the affairs of life...Help comes to us from the other side as we give help to those who have passed beyond the veil."

-- Elder John A. Widtsoe, Ensign, May 1980, 40

"There is no greater blessing that you can have than to stand as a proxy in a great service to those who have gone beyond."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Apr 2002, 3

"The temple becomes... the bridge from this life to the next. The temple is concerned with things of immortality. We wouldn't have to build a temple for marriages if we didn't believe in the eternity of the family. We build it so the family may be eternal. All of the ordinances which take place in the house of the Lord become expressions of our belief in that fundamental and basic doctrine."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Apr 2002, 3

"To accomplish this work there will have to be not only one temple but thousands of them, and thousands and tens of thousands of men and women will go into these temples and officiate for people who have lived as far as the Lord shall reveal".

-- President Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 3:372

"Before he comes, Zion must be built up, temples must rise wherever there are stakes, and the promises made to the fathers must be planted in the hearts of the children".

-- Elder Bruce R. McConkie, The Millennial Messiah, p 572

On 2 Jan 1846, in the Celestial Room of the Nauvoo Temple, Brigham Young uttered these prophetic words: "We can't stay in this temple but a little while. We have got to build another house. It will be a larger house than this, and a more glorious one. And we shall build a great many houses. We shall come back here and we shall go to Kirtland, and build houses all over the continent of North America. "

-- Heber C. Kimball Journal, 252

"This is the greatest era in the history of the Church for temple building. Never has the construction of temples gone forward with momentum that is now being carried forward. We will continue to build temples. They are busier than they have ever been. We will reach out wherever the need exists to construct these sacred houses of the Lord to accommodate the needs of the people."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Press Conference, Salt Lake City, 13

Mar 1995

"The sacred and important work that goes on in temples must be accelerated, and for this to happen, it is necessary that temples be taken closer to the people rather than having the people travel so far to temples."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, 1985, 53

"I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world".

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Nov 1995, 52

President Joseph F. Smith in his vision of the spirit world says, "choice-spirits...were reserved to come forth in the fullness of times to take part in laying the foundation of the great latter-day work, including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead."

He refers to the leaders who will do this work and then again refers to those "other choice spirits" (in addition to the leaders): "many others who received their first lessons in the world of the spirits and were prepared to come forth in due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men"

-- D&C 138: 53-56

"Although temple ordinances can be performed when only the minimum information is available, try to provide as much information about an ancestor as possible. More complete information identifies your ancestor uniquely so that he or she cannot be confused with another person. With less complete information, ordinances may be done more than once for the same person... Seek the guidance of the Spirit as you determine whether you should do the ordinance work for an ancestor now or try to find more information first."

-- A Members Guide to Temple and Family History Work, pgs 10, 13

"If you find an ancestor listed in the IGI [Ordinance Index] with his or her name spelled differently or with a different event date or place given, the ordinances for that person are valid. You do not need to submit the person's name for temple ordinances again"

-- A Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work, page 14

"Going in hand in hand with this increased temple activity is an increase in our family history work. The computer in its various ramifications is accelerating the work, and people are taking advantage of the new techniques being offered to them. How can one escape the conclusion that the Lord is in all of this? As computer facilities improve, the number of temples grows to accommodate the accelerated family history work."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Nov 1999.

"No work is more of a protection to the Church than temple work and the genealogical research which supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness..."

-- President Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Feb 1995, 32

"In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage – to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still...an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness."

-- Famous "Roots" Author, Alex Haley. Reader's Digest, May 1977, pp

"Our motive is to help members of the Church and others find their roots. The doctrine of the eternal nature of the family is one of the most important and sacred of our teachings. As I learn more about my own ancestors who worked so hard, sacrificed so much, it increases my sense of identity and deepens my commitment to honor their memory. Perhaps there has never been a time when a sense of family, of identity and self worth has been more important to the world. Seeking to understand our family history can change our lives and helps bring unity and cohesion to the family."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Deseret News, "Unveiling of a Heritage", 17 Apr 2001

"I would like to share with you a few observations that I have gleaned from what I call the primary text for the work of the redemption of the dead - I refer specifically to ... sections 127 and 128. I noticed that Joseph repeatedly referred to both ordinances and records. Ordinances are prerequisite to salvation. But accurate records provide both justification for and verification of the performance of an ordinance. Since records and ordinances are inseparably connected together, we see the purpose for the great efforts being made to search out and accurately record information.

"Records without ordinances are as incomplete as ordinances without records. The responsibility for these records is clearly upon the shoulders of mortals. Until the ordinances are properly performed and correctly recorded on earth, there cannot be and will not be a record in heaven. Thus, the opportunity for salvation is denied an individual until a valid ordinance and an acceptable record verifies his eligibility for a place in the kingdom of our Father. The records prepared on earth, then, become the source of judgment information."

-- Elder C. Max Caldwell, Devotional Address, Genealogy and Family History Conference, 6 August 1998

President Hinckley (4/98) In announcing small temples: "If temple ordinances are an essential part of the restored Gospel, and I testify that they are, then we must provide the means by which they can be accomplished. All of our vast Family History endeavor is directed to temple work. There is no other purpose for it. The temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign May 1998, 88

"The Saints have not too much time to save and redeem their dead, and gather together their living relatives, that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten...I would advise the Saints to go with their might and gather together all their living relatives to this place, that they may be sealed and saved, that they may be prepared against the day that the destroying angel goes forth; and if the whole Church would go with all their might to save their dead, seal their posterity, and gather their living friends, and spend none of their time in behalf of the world, they would hardly get through before night would come, when no man can work"

-- Prophet Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 330-331

"Ordinances and covenants become our credential for admission into His presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality. Once we have received them for ourselves and for our families, we are obligated to provide these ordinances vicariously for our kindred dead, indeed for the whole human family."

-- Elder Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, May 1987, p24

"The temple becomes... the bridge from this life to the next. The temple is concerned with things of immortality. We wouldn't have to build a temple for marriages if we didn't believe in the eternity of the family. We build it so the family may be eternal. All of the ordinances which take place in the house of the Lord become expressions of our belief in that fundamental and basic doctrine."

-- President Gordon B. Hinckley.

"Confirm upon us the Spirit of Elijah, we pray thee, that we may thus redeem our dead and also connect ourselves with our fathers who have passed behind the veil... Wilt thou also permit holy messengers to visit us within these sacred walls and make known unto us with regard to the work we should perform in behalf of our dead. And, as thou hast inclined the hearts of many to search out their progenitors...bless them, we pray thee, in their labors, that they may not fall into errors in preparing their genealogies; and furthermore, we ask thee to open before them new avenues of information, and place in their hands the records of the past that their work may not only be correct but complete also."

-- President Wilford Woodruff, dedicatory prayer of Salt Lake Temple

"Revelation comes to individual members as they are led to discover their family records in ways that are miraculous indeed. And there is a feeling of inspiration attending this work that can be found in no other. When we have done all that we can do, we shall be given the rest. The way will be opened up."

-- Elder Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Nov 1975, 99

"The spirit and influence of your dead will guide those who are interested in finding those records. If there is anywhere on the earth anything concerning them, you will find it."

-- Bryant S. Hinckley, Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard, Deseret Book, 1949, p 230.

"But the greatest and grandest duty of all is to labor for the dead. We may and should do all these other things, for which reward will be given, but if we neglect the weightier privilege and commandment, notwithstanding all other good works, we shall find ourselves under severe condemnation."

-- "Seeking after Our Dead", Genealogical Society of Utah, 1928, pp 35-36

"...Our efforts to promote temple and family history work should be such as to accomplish the work of the Lord, not impose guilt on his children... Members of this church have many individual circumstances – age, health, education... and many others. If we encourage members in this work without taking these individual circumstances into account, we may do more to impose guilt than to further the work.

"In the work of redeeming the dead there are many tasks to be performed...all members should participate by prayerfully selecting those ways that fit their personal circumstances at a particular time. This should be done under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord... Our effort is not to compel everyone to do everything, but to encourage everyone to do something.

"Leaders should encourage members to determine, according to the promptings of the Spirit, what temple and family history work they can do 'in wisdom and order' consistent with their own 'strength and means' (see Mosiah 4:27, D&C 10:4)." "There are many different things our members can do to help in the redeeming of the dead, in temple and family history work. Some involve callings. Others are personal. All are expressions of devotion and discipleship. All present opportunities for sacrifice and service."

-- Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Ensign, June 1989, 6

"The kingdom of God is a house of order because all things obey the law. The temples of the Lord on earth should also be orderly for the same reason. Temple work should not be done in a haphazard or disorderly way. Those who labor for the dead should endeavor to prepare their records in an orderly and systematic manner.

"When names are copied in an improper way and incomplete records are sent to the temples, but one thing will be the result – confusion. The compilers of records should try to find the information so that records can be made in family groups with all the necessary data for correct identification. When names are taken out of books without any accompanying information that will identify them... it will more than likely have to be done over again... researchers will make fewer mistakes and in the end save time and means by giving more attention to their recording. It is the disposition of many of the people to hurry their work along in an unorganized fashion because of their zeal for temple work. Patience, accompanied by prayer and thorough research, will prove best in the end."

-- Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, Vol 2, p 208

"Some of us get so enthusiastic over this temple work that we are not willing to abide by the rules and the regulations and to confine ourselves to our own line, but we want to spread out into the other fellow's line, and we want to do the work because we readily find names that belong to somebody else, and that method of work for the

dead is not permissible. It is all right to help others do their work, if we do that with proper consent, but each family group is entitled to do the work for its particular line.

-- Joseph Fielding Smith Jr, Doctrines of Salvation, Vol 2, p 207-208

"The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead'. (Teachings, p 356) It is a work that exceeds in magnitude even the preaching of the gospel in all nations, for it will go forward and be one of the dominant undertakings of the Millennium itself."

-- Bruce R. McConkie, The Millennial Messiah, p 269

"Every activity, every lesson, all we do in the Church, point to the Lord and His holy house. Our efforts to proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead all lead to the temple. "

-- Elder Russell M. Nelson, "Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings," Ensign, May 2001, 32

"For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage ... The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God, and after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.' (D&C 138:50, 58-59.) From this we learn that the dead cannot be judged, resurrected, and receive the correct body (i.e., Celestial, Terrestrial, Telestial, etc) until they have repented and been washed clean of their sins. They cannot be washed clean of their sins until they are redeemed through the ordinances of the house of God. These saving earthly ordinances can only be provided through a proxy such as ourselves. We have the ability to free the dead from the bondage that they endure and to allow them to continue on in their eternal progression."

-- Fred Christensen

"How often we go to the temple seeking for a spiritual experience. When we go to the temple and do the work for a person who is a stranger to us, have we ever thought that we are a stranger to that person as well... how much motivation does he or she have to make their influence felt there. It has been said, "We love whom we serve". If we go to the temple with a name of an ancestor that we have grown to know through finding and processing the necessary information, the temple experience draws us to them and them to us. They look forward to the time when we come to the temple and, if in tune, we can feel their presence."

-- Fred Christensen